

An Exercise in Deception: John M. Chivington at the Battle of Glorieta Pass

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Abstract

John Chivington is relatively well known for his actions at the Sand Creek Massacre. Smith examines Chivington's earlier career as a soldier with the First Colorado Regiment in an effort to determine if he deserved his reputation as a hero at the Civil War Battle of Glorieta Pass. During this campaign, Smith argues that Chivington and his men revealed a tendency to perpetrate the atrocities they would later commit at Sand Creek; something they hid from most accounts.

John Chivington is one of the most interesting characters in the history of the Colorado Territory. He arrived in the region as "presiding Elder" of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Rocky Mountain District.¹ A portion of the historical record depicts him as a man revered as a public servant, a hero of the Civil War in the West, and a fearless leader of the Colorado Militia. Early accounts described his gallant deeds at the Battle of Sand Creek, and credit him with outstanding performance and the Battle of Glorieta Pass. A closer inspection of the historical records reveals quite a different portrait of the man. Duplicitous, self serving, undisciplined, and cowardly are a few of the terms used to describe him. The heroic Battle of Sand Creek becomes the Sand Creek Massacre, and the triumph at Glorieta Pass is revealed as a defeat for the Federal Government in the West. Who is the real Major John Chivington, and what are the circumstances that address the controversies surrounding his role in the history of the Colorado Territory?

Many may not be aware that the Colonel took part in a campaign which served as the catalyst for his leading the cavalry at Sand Creek. In March of 1862, then Major John Chivington commanded a detachment of mostly Colorado Militia alleged to have marched to glory at the Civil War Battle of Glorieta Pass. Some historians, such as William Whitford and Reginald Craig, declared this mission a stunning success, which "finally arrested and hopelessly crushed, almost entirely by its own valor and strategy, the confederate campaign in New Mexico."² As result of his exploits in the Glorieta campaign, Major Chivington was proclaimed a beloved leader of men, the "ideal of a dashing, fearless fighting

¹ John M. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment," *New Mexico Historical Review* 33 no. 2 (April 1958), 144-45.

² William C. Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War* (Denver: The State Historical and Natural Society, 1906), 45.

commander.”³ Chivington and his regiment were credited with “sav[ing] the West for the Union” at the “Gettysburg of the West.”⁴

Is this an accurate account of what actually happened at the Battle of Glorieta Pass? The question becomes does the historical record maintain such dramatic accomplishments or was this heroic march just another example of historians misled? The record seems to suggest that some historians were deceived. John Chivington was no more a champion at the Battle of Glorieta Pass than he was at Sand Creek. The actions of the First Colorado and Major Chivington in particular were far from heroic. Major Chivington, while not in command of the regiment, assumed responsibility of maintaining discipline in the battalion. He failed in this mission and allowed his troops to act as little more than pillagers and thieves throughout the campaign. The Major allowed at least one atrocity against surrendering Confederates. Chivington failed to support his superior’s campaign assignment at the critical moment during the battle, and he acted in what could be argued was a cowardly manner. The Confederate Army held the ground at the end of the Battle of Glorieta Pass. The battle was a Confederate victory. The major undermined the authority of his superior officers, and schemed to gain command of the unit. The actions of the Colorado Volunteers under Chivington provide a revealing glimpse into the character of the regiment and its commander. He was the primary reason the Union lost the battle. John Chivington, with the help of circumstances and the men of the First Colorado Regiment, successfully deceived many who recorded the battle. During the Glorieta campaign, the historical record suggests that Chivington and his men revealed a propensity to perpetrate the atrocities they would later commit at Sand Creek; something they successfully hid from most historical accounts.

John Chivington’s mythical rise began with the coming of the Civil War to the region, which actually finds its beginnings in a secessionist movement in southern New Mexico. The territory, which included the bulk of present day New Mexico and Arizona, was divided along generally ethnic lines. The southern most region was inhabited by new, mostly white immigrants, while the northern section was predominantly of Mexican descent, centered around the old government settlement at Santa Fe. The white population of the south held a convention in April of 1860 and declared independence from the Territorial Government at Santa Fe. This body established the territory of Arizona which included all of the territory south of 33°40’. Four counties were established, and Dr. Lewis Owings was elected Governor. The Federal Government ignored this secession until Texas followed suit in early 1861. Arizona quickly took this opportunity to join the newly formed Confederacy as its first territory. Thus, it appears the Arizona and New Mexico dispute, in some small way, mirrored the events of the nation at large.⁵

During this period, the Confederate State of Texas grew concerned about the presence of a significant number of Federal troops in New Mexico. The people of the Lone Star State felt threatened by these soldiers, and began to take steps to counter any possible incursion on their sovereignty. These events gained the attention of an ambitious forty-four year old cavalry officer recently resigned from the United States Army. Henry Hopkins Sibley left his post as a major of dragoons in the northern portion of New Mexico Territory. He had served for a period as the commander of Fort Union, located about 80 miles northeast of Santa Fe and was familiar with the territory and its alleged military value.⁶

³ Ibid., 52.

⁴ Thomas S. Edrington and John Taylor, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass: A Gettysburg in the West, March 26-28, 1862* (Albuquerque: University Press of New Mexico Press), 113.

⁵ Edrington and Taylor, 4-5.

⁶ Jerry D. Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley: Confederate General of the West* (Natchitoches, LA: Northwestern State University Press, 1987), 209.

Sibley was a successful inventor with an independent streak which nearly ended his career. He had been accused of insubordination in a campaign in Utah against the Mormons but later acquitted of all charges. Upon his resignation from Federal service, Sibley's last words to his past companions were, "Boys, I'm the worst enemy you have!"⁷ Sibley left New Mexico on June 13 and within a month had made his way to Richmond to meet with Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He convinced Davis that the 250,000 square mile New Mexico Territory "was ripe for the plucking," and of prime military value. Davis provided Sibley with a commission as Brigadier General and a mission to rid the New Mexico Territory of Union forces. His orders were rather vague, and most of the details involved were left to the discretion of the new General.⁸

Sibley planned to carry out his mission by use of speed and stealth. He intended to cut his supply lines, and move into the region capturing provisions as he advanced. He fully expected that the recent immigrants of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and other territories would flock to join the ranks of his force. Sibley envisioned commanding a large force of volunteers capable of overrunning any Federal troops he encountered. The general counted on the fact that many of the settlers of Colorado and New Mexico were former residents of Confederate states, loyal to the cause of the new nation.⁹ Sibley spent the next several months raising and organizing three mounted regiments for service in his intended campaign. He arrived in San Antonio on August 12, 1861, and quickly commenced recruiting the necessary force. Recruiting took longer than Sibley originally imagined because he found it difficult to locate enough men capable of supplying their own horses and equipment. In any case, the troops were raised, and Sibley had at his disposal the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Regiments of Texas Volunteers. These regiments would often be referred to as "the First, Second, and Third Regiments, respectively, of the Sibley Brigade."¹⁰ This band of brave volunteers began their march toward New Mexico on October 22, 1861.¹¹

What course Sibley intended to pursue and his ultimate goals have been clouded in mystery. Major Trevanian T. Teel, Sibley's artillery officer and friend, claimed that Sibley's New Mexico operation was a prelude to a much more ambitious campaign. Teel explained, "The objective aim and design of the campaign was the conquest of California, and as soon as the Confederate Army should occupy the Territory of New Mexico, an army of advance would be organized, and 'On to San Francisco' would be the watchword."¹² Many also speculate that Sibley intended to capture the Colorado gold fields for the Confederacy.¹³ Regardless of Sibley's intentions, it is easy to understand that any invasion of the New Mexico Territory would make the Unionists in Colorado nervous.

These events acted as a catalyst in bringing the American Civil War to the doorstep of the newly formed Territory of Colorado. The United States found itself torn apart by the election of Abraham Lincoln. In this environment, the Territory of Colorado was organized by the Federal Government in Washington. Previous attempts at organizing a territorial government in the region were unsuccessful. With the

⁷. Edrington and Taylor, 9.

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Don E. Alberts, ed., *Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A. B. Peticolas*. (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 16-19.

¹⁰. Ibid., 20.

¹¹. William Randolph Howell, *Westward the Texans: The Civil War Journal of Private William Randolph Howell*, ed. Jerry D. Thompson (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1990), 68.

¹². T. T. Teel, "Sibley's New Mexico Campaign—Its Objects and the Causes of Its Failure," quoted in Thomas S. Edrington and John Taylor, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass: A Gettysburg in the West, March 26-28, 1862* (Albuquerque: University Press of New Mexico Press), 10.

¹³. Edrington and Taylor, 10.

secession of Texas, the Republican controlled Congress changed its mind. Colorado was plucked from the western portion of the recently fashioned state of Kansas, portions of Nebraska, New Mexico, and Utah Territories. Congress hoped to defuse the secessionist movement and prove their peaceful intentions toward the Confederacy by organizing several new territories without regard to the slave holding status of the provinces involved. Colorado officially became one of these new territories on February 28, 1861, just four days before Lincoln assumed the Presidency.¹⁴

Congress' effort to resolve the situation met little success. In an attempt to secure Colorado for the Union, Lincoln appointed William Gilpin, a staunch Republican and Unionist from the border state of Missouri, to the post on March 22, 1861.¹⁵ The new governor arrived in Denver to assume his duties on May 29, 1861, and discovered "a strong and malignant secession element" at work in the vicinity.¹⁶ Gilpin felt this sentiment had been "ably and secretly organized from November" of 1860.¹⁷ The Governor believed he needed to undertake "extreme and extraordinary measures to meet and control its onslaught."¹⁸

Denver had a recent scare when the flag of the Confederacy was hoisted above Wallingford and Murphy General Store on April 24, 1861. The result was a near riot between those locals supporting the Union and those in support of the Confederate cause. The flag was quickly removed, but dissent still smoldered upon Gilpin's arrival.¹⁹

Many of the people of the Territory were growing worried because "Gold was first discovered by Georgians, and the Southern element had always been well developed in" the area.²⁰ The Governor felt it prudent to begin strengthening the posts and forts on the outskirts of populated regions in an effort to maintain Federal control of the territory.

Facing a possible, or at least imaginable, secessionists movement, Governor Gilpin authorized the raising of a regiment of volunteers ostensibly to hold Colorado for the Union. As early as July of 1861 some of the area's citizens were organizing volunteers intending to join Federal forces fighting in the East. They wanted to serve in the cause of restoring the Union. Sam H. Cook succeeded in raising an independent company of mounted volunteers in hopes of joining some friends at Fort Leavenworth. This company went to Denver whereupon the Governor convinced them to stay and form a company of the First Colorado Regiment. The company obtained quarters on Ferry Street and commenced training and preparation for duty. Eventually, the company moved to the old Buffalo House on the edge of town.²¹ The recruiting process for the remainder of the regiment began in earnest in July with the appointment of company officers culminating in appointment of regimental officers on about August 26, 1861. The entire regiment was up to strength and preparing for possible action by early October.²²

¹⁴. Carl Abbott, Steven J. Leonard and Thomas J. Noel, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2005), 58-59.

¹⁵. *Ibid.*, 59-62.

¹⁶. William Gilpin, quoted in William C. Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War* (Denver: The State Historical and Natural Society, 1906) 38.

¹⁷. *Ibid.*

¹⁸. *Ibid.*

¹⁹. Whitford, 38-39.

²⁰. Ovando J. Hollister, *Boldly They Rode: A History of the First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers* (Lakewood, CO: The Golden Press, 1949), 5.

²¹. Hollister, 4.

²². *Ibid.*, 45-47.

The regiment would become known as the First Colorado Volunteer Regiment. Many contemporary accounts called the regiment the Pike's Peakers or Gilpin's Pet Lambs. Gilpin appointed Colonel John P. Slough, a successful local lawyer, commander of the regiment. The Governor named Samuel F. Tappan Lieutenant Colonel and the aforementioned John M. Chivington as Major. Ten companies were formed, and "at a cost of \$40,000 comfortable and sufficient barracks were constructed" on the outskirts of Denver at a location named Camp Weld.²³

Governor Gilpin possessed little or no means of paying for any of the regiment's needs. He cleverly devised a scheme in which he issued drafts and warrants on the United States Treasury to "defray the expense of raising the clothing and sustaining his Volunteers."²⁴ The Federal "Government was slow to endorse his action," and many felt they would never be paid. This made it extremely difficult for the unit to procure the necessary supplies and equipment.²⁵

Slough gave Chivington responsibility for day to day operations of the bulk of the regiment. The major was charged with the duty of maintaining discipline and obtaining proper supplies and provisions for the men. Colonel Slough served as commander but did not reside with the regiment and was generally busy with his law practice. Slough's absence and lack of contact with the soldiers effectively gave leadership of the unit to Major Chivington as Lieutenant Colonel Tappan was tasked with leadership of volunteers usually away on other missions.²⁶

The de facto leader of the battalion described the dreadful means officials and officers utilized to equip and provide for the regiment. In his memoirs, Major Chivington depicted some of the measures taken to obtain weapons for the regiment. The representatives approached merchants or citizens with "ammunition, percussion caps, lead, old arms and outfit of every description."²⁷ The prospective purchases were made on "Gilpin Drafts" issued on influence of the Governor against the treasury of the United States; however, the major problem was the Governor had not been given authority to issue such drafts. As result, many merchants and individuals were unwilling to accept the instruments of debt. Chivington calmly explained that if the persons in question "were not willing we made them willing."²⁸ He recalled "several instances where men said 'I don't want those drafts, they are worth nothing and never will be.' We said 'Now this is the only question of whether you will take them as an evidence of indebtedness or whether we take the property without any evidence.'"²⁹ In essence the men took whatever they wished. Chivington and others tasked with supplying the regiment exhibited little respect for the property of the citizens of the territory.

Chivington grew restless with the requisition process and began to subvert the chain of command. He and a good many of the men wanted to be sent to the war front. Chivington decided to bypass his commander, who he believed was satisfied remaining in Denver, and wrote to Major General David Hunter, commander of the Union Army Department of Kansas requesting a transfer of the Pike's Peakers to the battle front. The General's response was to reprimand the major for bypassing his superiors and not following the chain of command. Chivington became extremely angry with this reprimand, which

²³. Ibid., 6.

²⁴. Ibid., 7.

²⁵. Ibid.

²⁶. Whitford, 50, and Reginald S. Craig, *The Fighting Parson: The Biography of Colonel John M. Chivington* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1959), 131, and Hollister, 47.

²⁷. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment," 146

²⁸. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment," 146.

²⁹. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment," 146.

was still apparent from his description of the incident twenty odd years later.³⁰ Chivington's propensity to disrespect the chain of command and disregard the wishes and needs of his commander would be revealed again at a critical moment in the regiment's history. The men of the unit mirrored their commander's sentiments in countless ways.

As the person tasked with the day to day operations of the regiment, Major Chivington was responsible for discipline. Descriptions of the participants and others leave little doubt as to the effectiveness of Chivington's enforcement of discipline. After reading the accounts, it would be difficult for anyone to believe that the Volunteers were an effective military organization interested in the protection of the citizens and property of the territory. The First Colorado Regiment under Chivington's tutelage became little more than a mob.

Private Ovando Hollister, a newspaper writer turned volunteer in the First Colorado, Company F, illustrated in his memoirs just how little order Chivington enforced. He described many atrocities committed against the citizens of Colorado and New Mexico, making Chivington's account of the acquisition of weapons appear mild. Hollister's Company soon found itself spreading its own special brand of requisition on the unsuspecting towns in the region. An early example occurs when a detachment of his Company F on an expedition to escort some suspected secessionists to Denver camped at Colorado City near present day Manitou Springs. Feeling in need of provision, the recruits stole whiskey, pigs, and chickens in the dark of night from those civilians unlucky enough to live around their camp.³¹

On returning to Denver, Hollister's detachment was soon carousing the local bars and brothels. On December 1, 1861, the regiment grew so out of control that the "good people of Denver" began "organiz[ing] a police to preserve order in town."³² Hollister felt that this action rightfully antagonized his fellow volunteers. He explained, "Henceforth it became the object of many to create and foment variance with these minions of the city."³³ The men of Hollister's Company F soon began to loot and revel more frequently, and with more energy and vigor.³⁴

This impulse grew worse as Christmas approached. The soldiers were growing weary of the "bread and beef" they were served three times a day. While the meals were sufficient in quantity, the men were hungry for variety. Thus, the soldiers started foraging in anticipation of a large celebration. Hollister described careful reconnaissance of potential meals. One group hoping to "pick the lock of a hen-roost door," while another stole "a forty gallon barrel of vinegar" thinking it was whiskey. People were robbed at gun point. The regiment succeeded in pillaging "Eggs, hams, oysters, champagne, cheese and vegetables" in nightly forays through the surrounding villages. All of these clever foraging parties were justified in the minds of those involved by the fact that they were soldiers protecting the city and its occupants.³⁵

Christmas brought the citizens still further cause for grief as the volunteers became completely unruly, and some had to be apprehended. A scuffle resulted between the Marshall, the police, and several of the

³⁰. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment" 146.

³¹. Hollister., 29.

³². Hollister, 33

³³. Hollister, 34.

³⁴. Ibid., 33-34.

³⁵. Ibid., 34.

soldiers. One volunteer went as far as to place the Sheriff in a choke hold. This resulted in the soldiers declaring the city “lawful loot” for the remainder of the week.³⁶

Company F had been living in the city as there were not sufficient barracks for the entire regiment at Camp Weld. At the insistence of the city officials, they were finally moved to barracks at the outpost shortly after Christmas of 1861. Room had been hastily arranged when “Companies H and B had been sent to Fort Wise.”³⁷ The provisions, in the opinion of the soldiers, were lacking, so the company “jayhawked pork, beef, and mutton wherever [they] could successfully.”³⁸ They bragged, “If the company was moved to the barracks to rid the town of it, the action failed.”³⁹ Those incapable of gaining a pass found other ways to sneak into town and harass the citizens or their property. Major Chivington was fully aware of these actions and did nothing to stop it. He is quoted as stating the soldiers “only came to camp to get their meals.”⁴⁰

New Years found a member of the regiment drunk, and after a fight with the local police, he was in jail and unconscious. A sergeant and twenty members of the company responded by marching on the jail, and taking the offender back to the barracks. The delinquent was only returned to the Marshall after threats from higher civil authorities.⁴¹

One notable case of looting occurred at a shop in a village surrounding the fort. A group of enlisted men decided to take clothing they felt they needed from the establishment owned by “some Jews.” Upon arrival at the establishment, “they commenced helping themselves” to whatever they desired, without regard to the protests of the owners. The unnamed leader of the group of looters allowed the owners to list what was taken. He then gave them the name of the Orderly Sergeant of Company F as his own. The men successfully avoided being discovered as missing because they had snuck out while the Sergeant of the Guard was making his rounds and returned before it was discovered they were missing.⁴²

When the “Jews” contacted Colonel Slough, suspicion was soon cast on Company F. The Orderly Sergeant was summoned and identified as one of the culprits, as the leader of the robbery closely resembled, and was often mistaken for, the Orderly Sergeant by men in the regiment. Major Chivington “confirmed” the Orderly Sergeant’s claim that he had been playing chess at the time of the robbery. After corroborating the sergeant’s alibi the major immediately went to the company barracks and alerted the perpetrators to an impending search. The soldiers, thus prepared, began to bury their booty, and an investigation of the premises resulted in nothing. Chivington became an accessory after the fact. The regiment succeeded in meeting its needs through looting and stealing throughout its campaign, and the incidents increased in frequency and severity once the unit was sent to New Mexico.⁴³

In advance of the movement south, a party from the First Colorado managed to sneak ahead and secure the plunder from a previous night’s raid on a sutler. Some officers were sent to catch them, but they “took care to discover nothing.” The end result was a lot of fighting amongst the troops and with the local population attempting to protect their womenfolk. In the opinion of many militiamen of the First

³⁶. Ibid., 34-36.

³⁷. Hollister, 35.

³⁸. Ibid.

³⁹. Ibid.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

⁴¹. Ibid., 35-36.

⁴². Ibid., 40.

⁴³. Ibid., 40-43.

Colorado Regiment, all “sutlers in New Mexico [were] traitors...fatten[ed] on the government they would destroy. Their property is lawful loot to Union soldiers.”⁴⁴

Almost immediately after the arrival of the First Colorado Regiment in New Mexico public property began to vanish. The disappearance required the dispatch of a detachment of regular soldiers and officers to chase down a group of militia teamsters returning the regiment’s wagons. The wagons were searched for the missing property, but the detachment found nothing, and the incident was forgotten as the campaign progressed. The regiment members spent the first couple of weeks in the confinement of Fort Union and the surrounding area. With little to occupy their time, the soldiers occasionally brawled or “jayhawk[ed].” Members of the regiment managed to break “into the sutler’s cellar and [gobble] a lot of whiskey, wine, canned fruit, oysters” and such.⁴⁵

While camping in a small New Mexican village the militiamen began to scour the city in search of plunder and women. Finding few ladies decent enough, the soldiers were forced to share the ones they found acceptable, each taking his turn until all had their way with the woman in question. The men plundered what they could of the womenfolk and whiskey.⁴⁶

It is clear that the men of the First Colorado had no respect for public or private property rights, and they and their major exhibited no discipline. The regiment was out of control, and Chivington refused to take steps to curb the reprehensible behavior.

This lack of discipline included a distinct refusal of the regiment to accept the authority of officers. This is initially illustrated when Company F was visited by a Captain Sexton with his Rocky Mountain Rangers. The captain found himself and the remainder of Company F drunk after a night’s celebration. He decided after the celebration wound down that he needed to drill the soldiers and “fired his piece over camp”⁴⁷ simulating an attack. He proceeded to circle wagons and called reveille at midnight, preparing the unit for a quick movement.⁴⁸

The non-commissioned officers, still drunk from the earlier celebration, became impatient with the captain’s actions and not so politely informed him that they were in charge of the company. The Captain taking offense either called the Sergeant a son of a bitch or someone else shouted it. Soon the entire company was embroiled in a shouting match. Private Hollister felt “The boys had found their tongues, and a chance to abuse a commissioned officer, and they did it roundly.”⁴⁹ Sexton found himself on the verge of being pulled off of his horse by the crowd. Only a mass of officers and Sexton’s profound apologies restored order. Sexton rode off, and upon return found that in his absence the pass word to enter camp had been changed. Sexton nearly lost his life to a drunken Corporal who clearly knew the identity of the Captain. Sexton was arrested by the offended Sergeant and his command was disarmed. Order was not restored until late the following morning.⁵⁰

Another incident which demonstrates the enlisted men’s lack of respect of officers occurred shortly after the unit was called to New Mexico. Here, Sergeant Philbrook of Company K shot Lieutenant Gray of Company B in the face. The Lieutenant was attempting to arrest the non-commissioned officer for public

⁴⁴. Ibid., 55-56.

⁴⁵. Ibid., 54-55.

⁴⁶. Ibid., 58.

⁴⁷. Ibid., 22

⁴⁸. Ibid., 22-24.

⁴⁹. Ibid., 24.

⁵⁰. Ibid.

drunkenness. This event tore the regiment into two separate camps. Many supported the Sergeant's actions as justified because they felt the Lieutenant had overstepped his authority. They felt that the Sergeant had every right to be drunk and disorderly. Others, such as the soldiers of the Lieutenant's Company B, supported the immediate hanging of the Sergeant.⁵¹

Possibly the best illustration of how little respect the regiment had for officers occurred after Colonel Howe, an officer of the Third United States Cavalry, arrived to assume the duties as commander of the Southern Department of New Mexico. A soldier from "Company A was arrested for leaving his post."⁵² When he appeared before the new commander and asked to state his case, Howe exclaimed he thought the matter was "a shooting affair." The Colonel concluded that he "Hate[d] the Volunteers."⁵³

After the rest of the regiment became aware of Howe's intention, they began to plot against their new commander. Soon the entire regiment was on the brink of mutiny. They could not sit idly by and watch as one of their own was "executed for such a minor infraction."⁵⁴ In an attempt to neutralize the situation, Captain Downing of Company D hinted to Howe "that the Pike's Peakers were in the habit of hanging officers who didn't suit them."⁵⁵ Howe immediately reversed his previous decision and responded, "love the volunteers, love the volunteers, always loved the volunteers."⁵⁶ The men under Chivington's command refused to display even the most basic respect for the officers in charge.

Meanwhile, events which brought the regiment to New Mexico began to take shape. Colonel E. R. S. Canby anticipated the appearance of the Sibley Brigade at Fort Craig in Southern New Mexico along the Rio Grande just south of the alleged border between New Mexico and Arizona. Canby, having been recently promoted to command of the Department of New Mexico, had been preparing to face the Texans for months. He found himself unsure of whether Sibley would strike the eastern route up the Pecos river valley and move directly toward Fort Union or take the western route up the Rio Grande. In anticipation of a thrust up the Pecos, Canby sent details to secure or destroy provisions along the route attempting to force the Texans to take the western route. He busily prepared the defense of the territory, deciding to make his stand at Fort Craig after learning that Sibley had chosen the western route. Canby reasoned that Sibley would need to secure supplies and provision from the fort because the southern and central sections of the territory were desolate and bare. Canby's strategy called for the reinforcement of the garrison at Fort Craig. He also began preparing a supplemental plan of reinforcing the garrison at Fort Union approximately 80 miles northeast of Santa Fe. Canby realized that Sibley had briefly commanded the garrison and was aware that the bulk of military supplies in the territory were centered at the post. Most of the population and arable land in the territory sat on the ground north of Albuquerque and Santa Fe near the garrison at Fort Union. By early February, Canby's forces began settling into a routine and started to prepare to stop the progress of Sibley's Texas Brigade.⁵⁷

After inspection of the improvements Canby made to Fort Craig, Sibley decided not to gamble on a frontal assault to take the garrison. He was running short of supplies and did not feel he had the time to risk a siege. The General felt that by bypassing the fort he could force Canby to come out and give fight. Sibley realized that Canby relied heavily on untrained militia comprised of mostly disinterested and likely unreliable Mexican-Americans. Sibley felt that Canby's 3,800 men would not stand in the way of his

⁵¹. Ibid., 53-54.

⁵². Ibid., 126.

⁵³. Ibid., 126-27.

⁵⁴. Craig, 143.

⁵⁵. Hollister, 127.

⁵⁶. Hollister, 127.

⁵⁷. Thompson, *Sibley*, 248-58.

roughly 3,000 mounted Texans. If Canby did not attempt to stop the movement, Sibley's Brigade was predominantly mounted, so he felt he could swiftly overrun the garrisons and stockpiles of supplies at Albuquerque and Santa Fe before Canby could intervene. Sibley believed that with these rations secure he could swiftly move against Fort Union, secure the necessary supplies and then turn and deal with Canby on more favorable terms.⁵⁸

As Sibley moved his Brigade swiftly to the east side of the Rio Grande, Canby began to anticipate Sibley's intentions. He quickly moved to intercept the Texans at the only passable ford on the river at a point near Table Mountain just northeast of Fort Craig. Canby began to prepare his battalions for the approaching Texans leaving a large contingent to lie in wait for the approaching Rebels at the ford. Canby retired the remainder of his forces to the confines of Fort Craig, and waited for word from his advance battalions.

On February 21, 1862, the Texans attempted their bypass of Fort Craig and continued north. Canby intervened and approached the Confederates from the west side of the river. The rebels were moving quickly along the east bank. Advanced troops worked their way to the "upper side of [Table Mountain] where the enemy [would] have to come to the Rio for water."⁵⁹

This was the opening phase of the Battle of Valverde. The Texan's movement followed the course Canby had forecast. They drew near the river from the east side of Table Mountain, some seven miles north of Fort Craig and came under fire of the advanced portions of the Federal line.⁶⁰ The Federals attacked using the standard practice of "sending forth a volley of grape & canister."⁶¹ The Confederates retreated to regroup. The 70 fit soldiers of Company B of the much more disciplined Second Colorado Regiment under Captain Dodd, a West Point Graduate and professional regular army officer, were assigned the extreme left flank of the Union position. The Texans attacked the company with three mounted troops each "armed with a long lance."⁶² The lancers rushed the flank. Company B held no hope for support should they be overrun. If defeated the entire left flank of Canby's force would collapse and face annihilation. Captain Dodd, calmly prepared his men for the onrushing charge, helping them maintain their composure. He kept "stepping in front" telling the men "Steady there my brave mountaineers. Waste not a single shot. Do not let your passions run off with your judgment. Steady men, steady, do not fire until I command."⁶³ The company instinctively held until the command was given. Company B fired successfully, dislodging many Confederates from their horses. The company gave the enemy a second volley and followed that with a bayonet charge. The Confederates "were soon butchered" by the onrushing Coloradans. In the estimation of Private Alonzo Ickis only one of three companies of lancers "escaped uninjured."⁶⁴

Company B swiftly moved to protect a battery of cannon which had become vulnerable to attack. The action degenerated into a duel between the batteries of Confederate Captain Trevanion Teel, Sibley's friend and artillery commander, and the Federal batteries. Colonel William Scurry of the Fourth Texas Mounted Volunteers, one of the Confederate field commanders, organized an attack against a section of

⁵⁸. A. B. Peticolas, *Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A. B. Peticolas*, ed., Don E. Alberts (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 41-44.

⁵⁹. Alonzo F. Ickis, *Bloody Trails Along the Rio Grande: A Day-By-Day Diary of Alonzo Ferdinand Ickis* (Denver: Old West Publishing: 1958), 75.

⁶⁰. Peticolas, 42.

⁶¹. Ickis, 30.

⁶². Ibid., 31.

⁶³. Ibid., 32.

⁶⁴. Ickis, 30-32.

the Federal battery. A desperate charge was launched and the Confederates ran into a shower of Minnie balls and grape shot.⁶⁵

The Colorado Volunteers stood their ground, but the New Mexicans supporting them fled. The battery continued to fire, but the fleeing New Mexicans forced the withdrawal of the Federal forces. They “could not retreat with the battery.”⁶⁶ Rather than lose his guns, one of the “battery boys jumped upon a magazine which stood at the side of the guns drew his pistol cried ‘Victory or death’ fired his pistol into the ammunition,” killing himself and “many of the enemy.”⁶⁷ Company B was the last to retreat, holding the line as the Federals withdrew across the river under heavy fire. They reformed in good order and began a retreat back to Fort Craig.⁶⁸ Company B of the Second Colorado Regiment thus demonstrated what is possible when militia is placed under command of competent professional officers such as Canby and Dodd.

The Battle of Valverde was a victory for the Texans. The Confederates successfully bypassed Fort Craig; yet, in a way, this was a victory for Canby. Sibley had intended to capture the fort and its provisions. He needed supplies, and New Mexico had little to spare. He now had only one option left open to him. Sibley would attempt to live off the land. He knew that there were stores of supplies in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. He would have to hurry and grab those provisions before his Federal counterparts either reinforced the garrisons or destroyed the stores. Sibley also faced a garrison at Fort Union about 180 miles to the north. He would have to defeat either the forces at Fort Union or Canby at Fort Craig. To bypass Fort Union would allow the separate Union commands to link up. Sibley would have to deal with these garrisons individually because he did not have the manpower to deal with the combined Federal forces.⁶⁹

As result of the Battle of Valverde the Fourth Regiment of Texas Mounted Volunteers was dismounted and converted to Infantry. Sibley had decided that at least one regiment would have to be dismounted because he did not have the provisions to supply the horses, and the loss of horses in the lancer charge could not be replaced.⁷⁰ The dismounting of the Fourth Regiment would slow the Brigade’s progress at a time when swift movement was the cornerstone of Sibley’s plan to acquire and requisition supplies in the northern confines of the territory.

Canby decided to remain with his force at Fort Craig while calling for reinforcements to secure the vast stores of supplies kept at Fort Union about eighty miles north of Santa Fe. He ordered all remaining forces between Fort Craig and Fort Union to “remove or destroy” any and all public property which could sustain the enemy forces.⁷¹ Canby sent Major James Donaldson, a Maryland born West Point graduate and New Mexico Department chief quartermaster, and a band of reliable militia to “superintend the removal [and destruction] of public property,” which Sibley might utilize to sustain his forces.⁷² He also sent orders to Colonel G. R. Paul to hold Fort Union at all costs, while “harass[ing] the enemy” through

⁶⁵. Peticolas, 48.

⁶⁶. Ickis, 32.

⁶⁷. Ickis, 33.

⁶⁸. Ickis, 32-33.

⁶⁹. Edrington and Taylor, 21-24.

⁷⁰. Peticolas 55.

⁷¹. R. S. Canby to Adjutant General of the Army, February 23, 1862 In *War of Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series I vol.9* (herein after recognized simply as *OR*) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 633.

⁷². *Ibid.*, 634.

guerrilla tactics. Canby wanted to obstruct the Confederate's access to supplies and provisions.⁷³ The Colonel decided that the protection of Fort Union was the most important objective of Union forces in the northern portion of the territory. Canby begged for reinforcements, and his call was soon answered.⁷⁴ The First Colorado Regiment received orders to march without delay to the aid of Colonel Canby.⁷⁵ The Colorado Territory was transferred from the Army Department of Kansas "to the Department of New Mexico" by General George McClellan, giving Colonel Canby command of Gilpin's Pet Lambs.⁷⁶ The regiment took to the roads almost immediately upon receipt of such orders. The seven companies still at Camp Weld departed on February 22, 1862, and the three companies based at Fort Wise left for Fort Union on March 3, 1862.⁷⁷

Lieutenant Colonel Tappan, in command of the three companies at Fort Wise, spent the first night at Old Bent's Fort, just southwest of present day Lamar, Colorado, where he received news of the Battle of Valverde. The dispatch reinforced the urgency of the matter, and Tappan began to rush forward with the command at his disposal. He relayed the message to Colonel Slough.⁷⁸

The Colonel accepted Tappan's communiqué on March 5 while camping on Dry Creek, just north of Walsenburg, Colorado. He immediately called the men and asked them "if they were willing to endure a forced march for the 'honor and prosperity of the Republic.'" ⁷⁹ The men rapidly agreed, ate, and proceeded to march. The separate detachments joined up at the Purgatory River, by present day Trinidad, Colorado, on March 7. From this point the march was greatly accelerated on news that Fort Union faced an immediate threat from the Texans. The regiment allegedly covered "64 miles on foot in one consecutive 24 hours."⁸⁰ The First Colorado marched through an extremely bitter and cold wind storm while passing through Raton Pass in Northern New Mexico, yet still arrived at Fort Union on March 10.⁸¹ Upon arrival at the vital post, Colonel Slough failed to endear himself to the men under his command. Colonel G. R. Paul, Fort Union Commander, and Regular Army Major turned Colonel of Volunteers, made arrangements to provide tents and food for the arriving militiamen. Colonel Slough, who had ridden ahead in a wagon, refused any provision for his men. Slough stated, "it was entirely unnecessary; for his men were all old mountaineers and accustomed to all kinds of hardships & privations, & that this march was no more to them, than a ten mile march would be to soldiers in the States."⁸² As result of this action, Slough's men spent the night fully exposed to the elements and without food because the regiment's stores had yet to arrive.⁸³ This is a perfect illustration of just how little the militia officer cared for the men under his command.

Private Ovando Hollister, expressed similar sentiments after the regiment "gave the Colonel three cheers."⁸⁴ Hollister expressed his disappointment because the Colonel "did not speak."⁸⁵ Slough had

⁷³. R. S. Canby to G. R. Paul, March 16, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 653.

⁷⁴. Canby to AG, 633.

⁷⁵. D. Hunter to His Excellency Acting Governor of Colorado, February 10, 1862, In *OR, Series I vol 9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 630.

⁷⁶. L. Thomas, *General Order No. 4*, February 10, 1862, In *OR Series I vol. 9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 631.

⁷⁷. Edrington and Taylor, 30.

⁷⁸. Whitford, 77.

⁷⁹. Edrington and Taylor, 31.

⁸⁰. Chivington, "The First Colorado Regiment," 147.

⁸¹. Hollister, 45-51.

⁸². Charles Gardiner, "The 'Pet Lambs' at Glorieta Pass," *Civil War Times Illustrated* (November 1976), 32.

⁸³. Gardiner, 32.

⁸⁴. Hollister, 47.

been the commander of the regiment for six months, yet he had never spoken to them as a group. Hollister was certain that Slough exhibited “aristocratic” airs, and that the men had little “confidence in their commander.” Slough “could not see that a few words were indispensable to a good understanding”⁸⁶ of the men involved. The men of the regiment felt no great love or admiration for the man who led them.⁸⁷

Slough’s appearance at Fort Union would come to dictate the actions taken by the forces at the fort. By virtue of the date of his commission, Slough outranked Colonel Paul. Paul was a West Point graduate who had “frequently been tried in battle.” He held credentials to lead men in times of war, and clearly Slough did not. Rather than accept the tested authority of a qualified officer, Slough insisted on acting as commander of the forces stationed at Fort Union. The entire northern section of the Department of New Mexico fell under the command of an untrained and untested Militia Colonel. Paul appealed to the adjutant general for a commission or order to supersede Slough’s authority, but to no avail.⁸⁸

Almost immediately the two officers began to argue over Slough’s plan to move the bulk of the garrison toward Santa Fe. Colonel Canby had sent orders directing the commander of Fort Union, which he certainly thought was Paul, to “Concentrate all your reliable forces until the re-enforcements from Kansas, Colorado, and California arrive. If in sufficient force to operate directly upon the enemy, advise me of your plans, in order that I may cooperate.”⁸⁹ Colonel Canby certainly did not entertain any plans for Slough to move the bulk of the army independently. He expressly stated, “harass the enemy by partisan operations.” On March 22, 1861, Colonel Slough felt that the small force of Texans at San Antonio, New Mexico, were a threat, and he should march to meet this risk regardless of Canby’s orders. An amateur soldier took it upon himself to countermand the order of a superior officer. He felt that his judgment superseded that of two experienced, professional, regular army officers. An amateur made the decisions rather than trained professionals.⁹⁰ Slough’s refusal to follow Canby’s express, written orders would later place him in a difficult position.

Slough left Fort Union with the bulk of Paul’s former command, and most importantly, all of the fort’s artillery. He left Colonel Paul with meager forces, insufficient to the task of holding the garrison should the Texans arrive. The Colorado Volunteers continued their previous exploits of “carousing with Mexican women and fighting with Mexican men”⁹¹ as they passed through the territory. The battalion was marching toward the Texas Brigade hell bent on the idea of conquering the invading troops.⁹² On March 26 Major Chivington’s advanced detachment of about 610 men, including the cavalry component, stumbled upon a small band of 150 unprepared Rebel pickets in the vicinity of Apache Canyon, along the Santa Fe Trail about twenty-miles southeast of Santa Fe.⁹³ It is apparent from the descriptions that both commanders became confused at one point or another during the engagement. The combatants pushed each other back and forth, and after a three hour battle the vastly outnumbered Confederates withdrew.⁹⁴ A truce was arranged to care for the dead, and by the end of the day, the

⁸⁵. Hollister, 47.

⁸⁶. Hollister, 47.

⁸⁷. Hollister, 47.

⁸⁸. G. R. Paul to the Adjutant General, March 11, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 646.

⁸⁹. Canby to Paul, 653.

⁹⁰. Hollister, 55, and John M. Chivington to E. R. S. Canby, March 26, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 530-31.

⁹¹. Edrington and Taylor, 39.

⁹². Edrington and Taylor, 38-39.

⁹³. Hollister, 61.

⁹⁴. Howell, 96.

Colorado Volunteers held the ground having captured several prisoners and gained excellent intelligence.⁹⁵

The entire affair amounted to little more than luck on the part of Chivington. He had accidentally come upon a smaller force insufficiently prepared and was able to hold the ground because of his superior numbers and firepower. His soldiers were equipped with rifled muskets, and the bulk of the Texans were carrying shot-guns and side arms.⁹⁶ Thus better equipped and prepared the Major succeeded in driving “the Texans through the cañon.”⁹⁷ Chivington states in his report he decided to withdraw to Pigeon’s Ranch, just east of Apache Canyon along the Santa Fe Trail, because he feared the presence of the Confederate’s artillery.⁹⁸ However, he told many of his men his withdrawal to Pigeon’s Ranch was in an effort to supply water to his horses and troops.⁹⁹

Upon rejoining Slough at Kozlowski’s Ranch, about eight miles east of Apache Canyon, Chivington and Slough learned the disposition of the troops they faced from the captured Rebels. Rather than attack on the 27th, Slough awaited arrival of his remaining artillery. On the evening of March 27, 1862, The Colonel decided to utilize a bold strategy, which would be difficult for regular professional forces, let alone inexperienced militia. He ordered Major Chivington to take an improvised battalion of some 480 men and work his way around the Confederate rear and right flank, as Slough approached the Confederates from the front through the canyon, with his remaining 916 men. Chivington’s command would attack the rear or right flank of the enemy, while the Colonel occupied the Texans on their front.¹⁰⁰ If carried out as planned, the attack would destroy or capture the bulk of the Fourth Texas Volunteers.¹⁰¹ This plan, while daring and bold, would imperil Fort Union. Canby’s orders made protection of Fort Union Slough’s primary objective.¹⁰² By splitting his forces and coercing a confrontation, Slough was deliberately disobeying his orders, and imperiling Fort Union, the most important point in the entire region.

While the Federals busily prepared to move against the Confederates, the Rebels began to reinforce their position. The activity began the afternoon of the engagement at Apache Canyon, and the Texans were up in force at Johnson’s Ranch by very early in the morning of March 27, 1862. Slough informed the Confederate commanders that the previous days “armistice was up, and [Slough’s battalion] would attack them soon.”¹⁰³ Slough entertained no intention of attacking on the 27th; he simply wished to hide the arrival of his artillery.¹⁰⁴ The bulk of the Texan’s force secured strong defensive positions, and settled down to await the expected attack.¹⁰⁵

Both the Confederates and Federals began their approach to Glorieta Pass at roughly the same time. The Confederates, annoyed at the Union forces for not attacking the previous day, moved toward the Union

⁹⁵. Gardiner, 32.

⁹⁶. Edrington and Taylor, 3-7.

⁹⁷. Gardiner, 33.

⁹⁸. Hollister, 66-67.

⁹⁹. Gardiner, 33.

¹⁰⁰. Chivington, “History of the First,” 150.

¹⁰¹. John P. Slough to Adjutant General, March 30, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 534-35.

¹⁰². E. R. S. Canby to G. R. Paul, March 16, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 653.

¹⁰³. Gardiner, 33.

¹⁰⁴. Gardiner, 33.

¹⁰⁵. Peticolas, 75-77.

command determined to compel a fight.¹⁰⁶ The Yankee forces moved out in concert, leaving Kozlowski's Ranch early in the morning of March 28, 1862, going their separating ways about two miles into the march.¹⁰⁷

Colonel Scurry, commanding Confederate forces north of Santa Fe, decided to abandon his supply train to the care of a reserve detachment of about 100 men at Johnson's Ranch, which sat along the Santa Fe Trail about three miles west of Apache Canyon. He did not feel obligated to overly protect the train because of the terrain. His wagons were kept in a small canyon with very narrow approaches. Scurry believed that the only way to get to the train was through him.¹⁰⁸

Scurry and his 600 remaining men collided with Slough's roughly 900 troops during the late morning hours in a canyon near Pigeon's Ranch.¹⁰⁹ The battlefield was described as a "densely wooded pine country where you cannot see a man 20 steps unless he is moving."¹¹⁰ The dense woods made it difficult to fight. The commanders should have considered regrouping and moving the fight to a more hospitable environment, but the ground was chosen by junior officers, and before anyone could intervene, all parties had rushed headlong into the action. The Confederates slowly advanced, pushing the Federals back as the afternoon progressed. Lt. Colonel Tappan explained that the Union troops had to exercise extreme care because they expected Chivington and his battalion to arrive at any moment. He even allowed a Confederate soldier within a few feet of his lines, because he may have been an advance party of Chivington's command.¹¹¹ The Rebel escaped without a shot being fired, after a conversation with Tappan. Most of the Colorado Volunteers never realized their defensive perimeter had been breached. Meanwhile, Major Chivington's 480 soldiers were bound for Johnson's Ranch. The battalion followed a road which crested the Mesa above the Santa Fe Trail. This road only carried the troopers a part of the way. The remainder of the march would be across dangerous and hard to pass terrain. Through this juncture of the march, the battalion relied completely on their New Mexican guides, Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Chaves and Reverend Alexander Grzelachowski. Thanks mostly to the efforts of New Mexicans, the command arrived unperturbed at a high bluff overlooking the Confederate wagon train and camp above Johnson's Ranch. Chivington hesitated initially, because he expected to find the camp under attack by Colonel Slough and his force.¹¹² He did not immediately realize that the battle was raging some four miles up the canyon, as the canyon walls prevented the noise from Slough's engagement from reaching the Major's command.¹¹³

Chivington kept his soldiers quietly watching the Confederates in the canyon below. He wasted over an hour trying to decide his next move. The Major, apparently forgetting his mission objective of attacking the Confederate force in the rear, finally resolved that the train of goods was too much of a prize to avoid. He issued orders for Captain Lewis, a professional regular army officer and commander of a company of the U. S. Fifth Infantry, to lead an attack against the provisions and cannon in the valley below. Chivington decided to supervise from the safety of a position above the canyon wall.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶. Peticolas, 77-86.

¹⁰⁷. Slough to AG, 535.

¹⁰⁸. Don E. Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta: Union Victory in the West* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M Press, 1998, 128-29.

¹⁰⁹. W. R. Scurry to A. G., March 31, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 543.

¹¹⁰. Peticolas, 78.

¹¹¹. Ibid., 82-84. and Samuel F. Tappan to Adjutant General, May 21, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 536-38.

¹¹². Gardiner, 34.

¹¹³. Alberts, *Glorieta*, 129.

¹¹⁴. Gardiner, 34.

The entire command, with the exception of Major Chivington and his aides, swarmed down on the unsuspecting Rebels. The onrushing Union troops “raised the Injun yell and commenced pitching down the hill, some on their heads some on their feet.”¹¹⁵ The advancing Federals ran head-long into a battery held by the defenders, but the Texans could only get off two rounds before the battery fell to Lewis’ men. Most of those present were captured, but a few escaped up the canyon toward Pigeon’s Ranch. The volunteers then began doing what they did best, and plundered the wagon train for anything of value which could be carried. They were extremely happy to find prizes such as “fine officers clothing, fine Mexican blankets and all kinds of military stores, wines, Brandies, pickles, canned fruit, oysters & Navy Revolvers.”¹¹⁶ Captain Lewis spiked the cannon and had the remains tossed into a ravine because he saw no way to take the piece with them.¹¹⁷

At this point in the struggle, the lack of discipline once again reared its ugly head. As Captain Lewis and a portion of his command approached the hospital, the Confederate Chaplain, Reverend L. H. Jones, appeared at the door waving a white flag. An unidentified militiaman promptly shot the surrendering chaplain.¹¹⁸ This enraged the wounded Rebels recovering in the hospital. Chivington, through his aides, then gave an order to shoot all of the prisoners and wounded should the rest of the Confederate Brigade arrive before the battalion had a chance to vacate the premises.¹¹⁹

Precious time was wasted looting the wagons and securing prisoners. The Federals discovered and released several Union prisoners who had been captured earlier in the fight at Pigeon’s Ranch. These detainees informed Captain Lewis of the battle proceeding in the canyon about four miles to the east. Chivington did not act on this intelligence. He ordered that the wagons and provisions which could not be carried be put to the torch. As the wagons burned most exploded when the flames reach the powder kegs stored onboard.¹²⁰

As the volunteers were preparing to leave Johnson’s Ranch, a messenger arrived from Colonel Slough requesting immediate support. Private Gardiner, a First Colorado Volunteer, maintains that the request arrived at 3:00 in the afternoon.¹²¹ Rather than advance the four miles down the canyon, and confront the enemy in the rear as his orders clearly stated, Chivington decided to return by the route taken in the morning. The Major claimed in his report that he “hastened to obey” Slough’s orders, and rushed to his support, by taking an arduous route he thought to be sixteen miles in favor of a well travelled trail which he knew to be about four miles. Chivington effectively abandoned his Regimental Commander at his time of need.¹²²

In the mean time, the Federals were being routed in the canyon some four miles to the east of Chivington’s position. They were chased down the canyon only barely getting their artillery from the field. Their retreat was described by many of the enemy combatants. One claimed that the Federals “had clear run off. $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour had elapsed since all firing had ceased, and they made no effort to get permission to bury their dead.”¹²³ Another Confederate claimed the “Jayhawkers [were] chased by our

¹¹⁵ . Gardiner, 34.

¹¹⁶ . Gardiner, 34.

¹¹⁷ . Ibid., 34-35.

¹¹⁸ . W. R. Scurry to A. G., March 31, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 544.

¹¹⁹ . W. R. Scurry to A. G., 544.

¹²⁰ . Gardiner, 34.

¹²¹ . Ibid.

¹²² . Chivington to AG, March 28, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 538-39.

¹²³ . Peticolas, 86.

men 3 miles.”¹²⁴ In his final report of the battle, Colonel Scurry wrote, “So precipitous was their [Slough’s battalion] flight that they cut loose their teams and set fire to two of their wagons.”¹²⁵ The confusion of the Federal retreat is reinforced by the report of the operation’s Quartermaster Captain H. M. Enos. He described a scene in which Slough’s force left “the wagons entirely without protection.”¹²⁶ Enos explained that Slough’s battalion retreated past the supply trains without stopping. Scurry’s regiment nearly stumbled upon the supply train only to have their advance halted after Scurry decided to arrange a truce to care for the dead and wounded, because it was beginning to get dark.¹²⁷ Scurry had to send a representative to chase down the fleeing Union forces.¹²⁸

The Confederates successfully overran Federal opposition. Major Chivington hesitated to attack and failed to join the battle. At the time he arrived at the summit above Johnson’s Ranch, the Federals and Confederates were fully engaged, and any attack on the Confederate rear would have likely resulted in the complete destruction of Scurry’s portion of Sibley’s Brigade. Chivington could still have rendered effective service had he hastened to the aid of Slough when the latter requested immediate support. His decision to return utilizing the route he had taken earlier in the morning effectively doomed Slough’s operation. After reading all of the accounts it is clear that the Confederates won the Battle of Glorieta Pass. The Rebels held the ground at both Pigeon’s Ranch and Johnson’s Ranch, and the Pike’s Peakers were in full retreat.

Slough and his command retired, “not in very good order” to Kozlowski’s Ranch.¹²⁹ Chivington arrived late in the evening, after a long and strenuous march. On March 29, 1862 Slough withdrew to Bernal Springs, and positioned his contingent to guard the approaches to Fort Union as his original orders suggested. Private Gardiner described the retreat by stating that suddenly the Colonel was “much more prompt in obeying” Canby’s commands.¹³⁰ Slough received instructions to retire to Fort Union on March 31, which he swiftly obeyed.¹³¹ Many of the soldiers under his command lost respect for their commander because they felt he had spent the entire engagement in the protective confines of the rear.¹³² Slough, like Chivington, led the fight from a conspicuously safe location.

Slough resigned his commission soon after the engagement at Pigeon’s Ranch. He later explained he left the regiment out of fear for his personal safety. Others convinced Slough that he had been intentionally fired upon by one of his own men. The Colonel secretly feared that a bullet which came near him was from one of his own troops. He later wrote,

...at the battle of Pigeon’s Ranch a volley was fired at me by a part of this company—Lt. Murphy of New Mexico and Lt. I. C. Anderson will testify to this fact, hence I hid myself from that flank so as to avoid a repetition—this is what gave rise to the report that I acted cowardly at that time—I resigned the colonelcy because I was satisfied that a further connection would result in my assassination. I am now satisfied that men now high in rank and command were at the bottom of

¹²⁴ Howell, 96.

¹²⁵ W. R. Scurry to A. G., 544.

¹²⁶ H. M. Enos to Chief Q. M. April 5, 1862 In *When the Texans Came: Missing Records from the Civil War in the Southwest*, ed., John P. Wilson, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 268-69.

¹²⁷ Enos, 268-69.

¹²⁸ W. R. Scurry to A. G., 544.

¹²⁹ Chivington, “The First Colorado Regiment,” 150.

¹³⁰ Gardiner, 35.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Dale F. Giese, ed. *My Life with the Army in the West, Memoirs of James Farmer, 1858-1898* (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1993), 42-45, and Edrington and Taylor, 107.

this thing. I am satisfied that to-day [February 6, 1863] if a chance offered I would be murdered, I say this in confidence that you will keep it secret.¹³³

Could Slough have suspected Chivington's participation in the attempt on his life? The reference certainly would suggest something of the sort. In any case the men of the First Colorado Regiment had proven once again that they bore no respect for their commanding officer.

Slough resigned his commission effective April 12, 1862, and was immediately replaced by Major Chivington after Tappan stepped aside.¹³⁴ Tappan would later write to Chivington "From the earliest organization of our regiment you have done your utmost by outspoken remarks and secret intimation to destroy my influence as an officer in the regiment."¹³⁵ It could easily be argued that Chivington contrived a scheme to gain command of the regiment from the very beginning. It appears that Slough felt Chivington conspired to have him killed, and Tappan believed that Chivington worked to undermine his position from the earliest days of the regiment. One could certainly argue that Chivington's failure to support Slough's battalion at Pigeon's Ranch on March 28, 1862, could have been part of Chivington's design to secure command of the Pike's Peak.

Upon arrival at Fort Union, a group of five soldiers from Hollister's company deserted. Morale in the regiment became an important problem. The soldiers were beginning to feel that "even death seemed preferable to this worse than dog's life."¹³⁶ In an attempt to make themselves feel better, the militiamen felt obliged to take out their frustrations over the loss at Pigeon's Ranch on the local population by stealing from the poor citizens living around the regiment's camp.¹³⁷

Hoping to destroy Slough's battalion, Scurry pleaded with Sibley for ammunition and supplies for a renewed attack. He stated emphatically that once resupplied he "wish[ed] to get after them [Slough's regiment] again."¹³⁸ The Confederates were confident they could finish off the Pike's Peak. Sibley rushed from Albuquerque to Santa Fe to begin overseeing operations, and to prepare to engage Slough and Paul at or around Fort Union. The General requested reinforcements and supplies to support a planned attack against the Federal garrison at Fort Union prior to the arrival of Canby. Sibley realized that the real danger existed in the south with Canby's force and not the forces under Slough. Sibley intended to defeat Slough and assault Fort Union and then proceed to counter any movement the Federal commander in the south attempted.¹³⁹

Unbeknownst to Sibley, Canby proceeded north with the bulk of his Fort Craig garrison on April 1, 1862. Canby arrived at Albuquerque in the early afternoon hours of April 8, 1862, and feigned an all out attack on the city in an effort to draw Sibley's defenses. This ruse allowed Canby to slip by the Confederates, and join his northern command.¹⁴⁰

¹³³. John P. Slough to Lieutenant Colonel Sam Tappan, February 6, 1863, quoted in Arthur A. Wright, "Colonel John P. Slough and the New Mexico Campaign," *The Colorado Magazine* vol. 39 no. 2 (April, 1962), 102.

¹³⁴. Gardiner, 36, and Hollister, 86.

¹³⁵. Samuel F. Tappan to John M. Chivington, January 23, 1863, quoted in Thomas S. Edrington and John Taylor, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass: A Gettysburg in the West, March 26-28, 1862* (Albuquerque: University Press of New Mexico Press), 107.

¹³⁶. Hollister, 78.

¹³⁷. Hollister, 78.

¹³⁸. W. R. Scurry to A. G., March 30, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 542.

¹³⁹. H. H. Sibley to A. G., March 31, 1862, In *OR I vol.9* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 541.

¹⁴⁰ Edrington and Taylor 109-10.

The unification of the Federal forces under command of Canby and Paul, and not the destruction of Scurry's supply train, convinced Sibley that offensive operations in the New Mexico theatre were no longer feasible. As such, orders were prepared and the Confederate troops began their long and arduous retreat back to Texas. Except for a few minor and brief skirmishes along the route, the danger of Sibley's invasion of New Mexico had effectively come to an end.

An investigation of the Battle of Glorieta Pass reveals that the Confederates won the battle. While Slough and Chivington had an opportunity to totally crush and destroy Scurry's regiment of Sibley's brigade, Chivington's failure to support Slough's plan of attack doomed the enterprise. Scurry and his division held the ground at the end of the day with the Federals in full retreat. After the battle, Scurry wanted desperately to rejoin the campaign and destroy Slough's battalion.¹⁴¹ The Confederate forces involved certainly felt that the battle was a Rebel victory.¹⁴²

One also learns Sibley's situation was hopeless prior to the battle. He was trapped between Canby's force in the south and the garrison stationed at Fort Union. Sibley could not continue until he took at least one of these positions from the Federal forces. He felt his best bet laid in taking the vast stores at Fort Union, and if successful would have forced Canby to pursue. While Fort Union stood, Sibley could not advance. He needed the supplies which only Fort Union was capable of providing because Canby and Donaldson succeeded in destroying or moving most of the available provisions. Slough's foray into Glorieta Pass dangerously imperiled the Fort. Canby's plan defeated Sibley, not Chivington's destruction of Scurry's supply train. Chivington did not defeat the Confederate Army. He played little role in Sibley's decision to withdraw from New Mexico.

Major Chivington failed to enforce any semblance of discipline within the ranks. He allowed the men to rob, borrow, steal or otherwise requisition at will any and all supplies they felt they needed. The men had no respect for the property rights of the very population they were charged with protecting, and in at least one instance Chivington played a role in support of one of the regiment's thefts. The men looted wagons at a critical point in the battle on March 28, 1862, when they should have been preparing to support Slough at Pigeon's Ranch. Colonel Paul wrote newly promoted Colonel Chivington to complain about "a large number of the enlisted men in [his] regiment absent without leave, beyond our pickets, committing all kinds of depredations on private property."¹⁴³ He went on to express concern that many of the men were plotting to seize a group of supply wagons approaching the post.¹⁴⁴ This was just a few weeks prior to the recall of the regiment to Colorado.¹⁴⁵ These failures in discipline even led to the shooting of an unarmed surrendering non-combatant. The men of the First Colorado Regiment did not respect authority or property, and the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of John Chivington. Whitford's and Craig's claim that the First Colorado Regiment was solely responsible for thwarting Sibley's invasion of New Mexico is clearly false. The real hero was the terrain. New Mexico did not have the resources necessary to fulfill the needs of Sibley's invasion. He lost the campaign the moment he bypassed Fort Craig. He needed the supplies, and with a portion of his command dismounted he could not move quickly enough to stop the Federals from removing or destroying the supplies he so desperately

¹⁴¹. W. R. Scurry to A. G., 542.

¹⁴². E. R. Boles to his father, April 25, 1862, "E. R. Boles Letters, 1862." Folder 1. Fray Angélica Chávez History Library, Albuquerque and W. R. Scurry, *General Order No. 4*, March 29, 1862, "John A. Clark Papers," Box 2, Folder 11. Fray Angélica Chávez History Library, Albuquerque.

¹⁴³. G. R. Paul to J. M. Chivington, May 8 1862, *In When the Texans Came: The Missing Records from the Civil War in the Southwest 1861-1862*. ed. John P. Wilson, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 279.

¹⁴⁴. Paul, 279.

¹⁴⁵. Giese, 49.

sought. The persons responsible for these actions were Canby and Donaldson. Canby devised the plan to remove everything possible and Donaldson carried out Canby's instructions.

Why does the myth of Chivington's heroic deeds at Glorieta survive? That can be answered through an investigation of events which took place before the First Colorado marched off to war. Chivington's letter attempting to get the regiment out of Denver and into action, resulted in a reprimand for bypassing the chain of command.¹⁴⁶ This left the remainder of the regiment in a very delicate situation. They could not write reports of incidents or other correspondence without the approval or authority of the commanding officer. The only written and published reports of the battle were those written by Tappan, Chivington, and Slough. Confederate reports of the action did not appear or were not available to the rest of the country until the late 1880s after the War Department began to publish the *Official Records*. Thus the reports circulating in the local newspapers and periodicals were strictly the opinions of the commanders of the regiment.

While Captain H. W. Enos' report to the Quartermaster in Chief, and Paul's letter to Chivington regarding the regiment's behavior were critical of the First Colorado Regiment, these documents were not published until 2001 by John P. Wilson as part of his collection of the missing records of the campaign. Neither document was part of the *Official Records*. It appears that at least part of the explanation lies in the control which the commander of the regiment held. First Slough, and later Chivington, as commanders of the regiment and department, controlled the spread of information to the military establishment. Thus, they effectively controlled what was reported.

Another matter which likely played a part in the distortion of Chivington's responsibility was Slough's delicate position. He had to sell his superiors on the fact that he did not disobey Canby's orders. Slough remedied this situation by calling his expedition a "reconnaissance-in-force."¹⁴⁷ Because Slough attempted to sell the battle as a reconnaissance, he could not accuse Chivington of not following his orders to attack the enemy in the rear. He likely did not want to be implicated in a possible Court Martial offense, and as such he could not blame the failure at Glorieta on Chivington. Each commander had reason to support the other's version of events, and as such each likely played along, and accepted the other's report.

It is possible Slough was afraid of Chivington because he apparently believed Chivington had been involved in the Colonel's near murder back at Pigeon's Ranch. Slough, in any case, was telling his men that they intended to attack and destroy the Confederates, while telling his superiors he was simply doing reconnaissance and was forced into a fight from which he extricated himself in an orderly manner. Tappan, on the other hand, was critical of Chivington, but many likely wrote this off as jealousy. Tappan felt he had to refuse command of the regiment after Slough's resignation because of the popularity of Chivington who was elected Colonel by acclamation of the other officers in the regiment. Tappan felt he had been undermined by Chivington from the very beginning. Tappan's feelings about Chivington became public knowledge, and his criticism fell, for the most part, on deaf ears.

Another reason could simply be prejudice. The men of the First Colorado hated the Mexican-Americans with whom they fought. They constantly referred to them as "Greasers" of poor character.¹⁴⁸ The men of the regiment did not like the Mexican Americans and were unwilling to grant them any respect or honor for the part they played in the action at Johnson's Ranch. Chaves and Grzelachowski were the men responsible for leading Chivington to the ranch. He would never have arrived to destroy the wagons, nor

¹⁴⁶. Chivington, "The First Colorado," 146.

¹⁴⁷. Slough to A. G., 534.

¹⁴⁸. Ickis, 76, Hollister, 58, and Gardiner, 34.

been able to navigate his way back to Kozlowski's ranch without the aid of his Mexican-American guides. Chivington's stealing of other men's glory was a subject taken up early on by the *Santa Fe Gazette*, which gave credit for the destruction of the wagon train to a Captain Collins from the New Mexico Volunteers.¹⁴⁹ This newspaper was not available in Colorado, and Whitford's or Clark's investigations never came upon the article. Another small New Mexico paper stated, "we object to Colonel Chivington strutting about in plumage stolen from" Captain Lewis.¹⁵⁰ There is no mention of either of these controversies in any of the early accounts of the battle.

One of the main reasons history may have been distorted was the fact that the nation was embroiled in a much larger conflict. The war in the East was beginning to enter an important new phase. General McClellan was just beginning the Peninsula Campaign against Lee's Army and Jackson had only recently begun to march into the Shenandoah Valley.¹⁵¹ The attention of the nation was focused on the larger and more important engagements taking place in Virginia. Colorado and New Mexico were little more than afterthoughts to most of the population and leaders of the republic in light of all the other more pressing matters taking place in the East. Chivington and the men of the First Colorado were lucky that the War Department did not have the time, or the manpower to investigate the few reports of malfeasance which made their way through the ranks. Even the exploits of his command at Sand Creek did not come to the attention of the authorities until much later and then only after constant attempts by Major Wynkoop and others.

The newspapers of Colorado may have also played a significant part in the ruse. The outstanding drafts which were issued to finance the regiment were still unpaid at the time of the battle. Once word began to spread that the Colorado Volunteers had been instrumental in thwarting Sibley's invasion, the Federal Government began to consider paying the notes. The newspapers and officials in Colorado would most likely have taken this as incentive to promote and mythologize the actions of Chivington and his men. Shortly after the War Department was sold on the alleged exploits of Chivington and his command, the drafts were paid, and Gilpin's mistake was suddenly forgiven.¹⁵² Many in Colorado certainly had a monetary interest in promoting the myth of Major Chivington and his victory at Glorieta Pass.

One other area which influenced the mythologizing of Chivington were the feelings the men had for their previous commander. Slough was hated by the regiment. Chivington was in day to day command for most of the battalion's existence.¹⁵³ Tappan was away with the remainder of the command while they were stationed at Fort Wise. For the most part, Slough only took part in the operations of the regiment from a distance. Chivington, however, was one of the men. He was present at their recreation activities, and participated in their cover up of the theft of the sutlery run by "the Jews." Chivington was popular with the men. They looked up to him and forgave him his faults. Their dislike for Slough may have made this all the more attractive to the battalion. The men did not generally question Chivington's exploits. Chivington wrote the myth, and the men, either knowingly or not, repeated these myths to any and all who wished to hear. His alleged destruction of the supply train, regardless of who actually was responsible, became the story of camp. The popular major saved the day and brought good news to a group of soldiers, who had just hours before, ran from the face of the enemy. The soldiers could take comfort in the fact that they, through their popular commander, had defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Glorieta Pass.

¹⁴⁹. *Santa Fe Gazette*, April 24, 1862.

¹⁵⁰. *Rio Abajo Press*, March 8, 1864.

¹⁵¹. Alfred H. Guernsey and Henry M. Alden, *Harper's Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion in the United States* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1866), 330.

¹⁵². *Rocky Mountain News*, June 7, 1862.

¹⁵³. Whitford, 50.

Chivington turned out to be an effective interpreter of history. He utilized the fame he had gained to secure and maintain command of the First Colorado Cavalry. He utilized this command much the same way he utilized his previous command. History teaches us many lessons, and probably the best lesson is to question all alleged heroes. Chivington succeeded in writing a legend which glorified his exploits at the costs of others. He succeeded because he had a lot of help. The demoralized men found victory from the earlier defeat through the actions of men under command of the major. They grasped this as a means of redemption. Likely many believed that they had carried the day, and to an extent they had. The major was no hero. Chivington managed to mislead historians because the attention of the nation was drawn to the larger conflict in the east, his men's dislike of their previous commander, the lack of independent sources, and self glorification. For the past 150 years the history of the First Colorado was written by Chivington and those who admired him as a commander.

The First Colorado Regiment did not defeat Sibley's Brigade at Glorieta Pass. John Chivington was no more a hero at the Battle of Glorieta Pass than he was at Sand Creek. The actions of the First Colorado and Major Chivington in particular were far from heroic. Major Chivington failed in his mission to promote discipline within the ranks and allowed his troops to pillage throughout the campaign. This failure to enforce discipline resulted in the shooting of an unarmed surrendering non-combatant. Chivington failed to follow orders at a critical moment during the battle, and he acted in what could be argued was a cowardly manner. He undermined the authority of his superior officers and schemed to gain command of the unit. These actions likely resulted in Slough's defeat. The actions of the Colorado Volunteers under Chivington provide a revealing glimpse into the character of the regiment and one of its commanders. Major John Chivington was the primary reason the Union lost the battle. John Chivington, with the help of circumstances and the men of the First Colorado Regiment, successfully deceived those who wrote the record. During the Glorieta campaign John Chivington and his men revealed a tendency to perpetrate the atrocities they would later commit at Sand Creek, and they successfully hid this fact from most historical accounts.

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